2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



palatable to peasant taste. If the bread supply gave out at the table, the diners sat calmly without eating until the new loaf was brought in, for it was almost impossible for them to eat unless holding a piece of bread in the left hand. Dunking was the approved method of disposing of the juice of a stew. When eating, one was apt to get a greasy coating on the lip; the accepted technique was to scrape this off with a piece of bread already on its way into the mouth. Forks and small spoons were used only when there were guests. But why should table manners not be simple and direct?

"Knives for everybody are not used. There is one knife at the table, but people use their hands, for we peasants say, 'For what did God give the fingers to man if he does not use them to feed himself?' "

As for the preparation of the food:

"Usually it is the duty of the oldest woman in the family to prepare the food, because she knows the best how to cook and she can cook most deliciously of all. In case she is sick, then her daughter-in-law or her daughter cooks. If there are not such, then the man cooks." Here my informant sniffed and added scornfully, "Of course, in such a case dry food is eaten chiefly, but even the men can cook at least some of the dishes."

I asked another woman who really "knew her place," as a Dragalevtsy man would say, whether men could cook:

"Of course, men can do everything woman does, but woman cannot do everything men do. Who cooks for those men that are shepherds or work in the forests but they themselves? Men do not need women half as much as women need men. Yet we all recognize that cooking is for the women, not for the men."

No matter what time of day I entered a village home the *domakinya* (housewife) with unfailing and genuine hospitality offered me food or drink. I began to wonder when the people had their regular meals and found that some homes had no regular mealtimes; instead, people got up and took a piece of bread or anything else available whenever they were hungry. In most families, however, about nine o'clock in the morning a meal called *ruchok* was served to all; at about two, dinner was served, and two hours after sunset the people gathered for supper. One villager put it this way:

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



582 married in Dragalevtsy. Because she had a physical deformity her
208 parents had given up all hope of marrying her off since they knew she would be unable to attend properly to her housework and field work. During the first World War there were two old maids in the village who had not been chosen for marriage because each of them had a goiter. A doctor with the German forces cured the goiters
[554] and these two unmarried women became desirable prospects, one of them marrying a priest's son in Sofia, one of the highest prizes a village girl could capture in her matrimonial venture.

[208] Since public opinion made life miserable for unmarried women,
[562] even a girl of independent temperament looked upon marriage as an inevitable event, especially if she stayed in the village. With men it
581 was different. They could choose to remain unmarried and not lose prestige in the community. People only said: "Well, Asen simply doesn't want to marry. He's a bit shy of skirts, you know."

The young men to whom I talked were outspoken in regard to those qualities which they looked for in choosing a mate: good health, industry, efficiency in the house and field, and proper care of the person. The girls, on the other hand, had little to say regarding the qualities they wanted in a husband. They seemed willing to accept whatever luck brought them. But marry they must.

584 There were many ways in which the husbands and wives had
574 become acquainted with each other. If both had been born in
883 Dragalevtsy, as was the case with a little more than half the couples, they were already aware of the other's characteristics either through personal acquaintance or hearsay. Many of the married couples had played together as children while tending the cattle in the sun-drenched pastures, only to become distant until most of the adolescent period passed. Then began frequent meetings at the fountain at sunset, shy flirtation at the *horo* and *sedenki,* or rambling conversation on the way to and from the Friday market. At the *sedenki,* held by the young people in various girls' homes on winter evenings, games involving forfeits were played. At one *sedenka* I attended, the girl giving out the penalties sent a couple obviously in love to the dark outdoors "to see what the weather was like." A few minutes later she sent a second couple out to see where the first had gone. All four of the

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



584
574
883

young people came back giggling with excitement. Only in some rare instances had shyness kept the young couple apart in the village until matchmaking elders brought them together on the wedding day.

Old and young alike agreed as to the importance of the *sedenka* as a boy-meet-girl occasion. Even some of the intelligentsia with a nostalgia for the simplicity of their early years in the village talked fondly of these groups in which young people whiled away many hours in common work and merriment. The *sedenka* was the Bulgarian counterpart of our pioneer cornhusking and quilting bee. There, romance as it existed in the hearts of the peasant boys and girls came to the surface and was expressed in such simple acts as the giving of a flower, the kissing of a hand or cheek. These groups, which met in fall and winter, consisted early in the evening only of girls who had been especially invited by the hostess one or two days ahead of time. Two or three hours before the *sedenka* was to begin the girl doing the entertaining had to put on her heavy *kozhuh* and again tour the neighborhood to extend a formal invitation to each guest. When the girls had gathered they immediately began to spin, since work was the pretext for coming together. Sometimes the guests brought their own work, and sometimes they assisted the hostess in carding or spinning her wool. If spinning was the order of the evening, each girl was supposed to average about a pound of rather coarse thread.

As the door was usually locked after the girls were inside, the boys, whose arrival was announced by the barking dogs, had to knock for admittance. The hostess then asked who was knocking, and one of the boys told his name.

"The girls and even the hostess know with which boys he associates and if there is any one of them who is undesirable to some or all the girls, then none of the boys is allowed to enter. Usually, however, if they open to the boys, they will open to all; but if they are not in a good mood [very rarely] then they do not open to any."

A gust of cold, fresh air accompanied the boys' entrance, and activities inside ceased until they had made the rounds, shaking hands with those present. After much squeezing and adjusting each boy found a place to sit, usually next to the girl known to be his favorite.

The coming of the boys might or might not stop the work. Quite

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



The coming of the boys might not stop the work.[2] Quite often the girls were able to accomplish a great deal in spite of the boys, but usually the entertainment which began soon after the boys arrived distracted the girls from their task. There was much singing. Someone struck up an old ballad and others joined in. Then, after a few more ballads, someone ventured a popular song. I once asked a young woman whether she ever sang any modern songs (knowing well enough that she did). She replied:

"Yes, the Dragalevtsy girls know almost all the popular songs. They hear the boys singing them on the street or at *sedenki* and then ask some boy who is a relative to write down the words. If they see that the song is not appropriate, they will not sing it. They always learn the words of songs and never whistle or 'murmur' [hum]."

I wondered to what extent the patriotic songs in the school were replacing the folk songs. Here is what informants at one *sedenka* said:

"As soon as a girl leaves the school, she does not sing any of the songs learned in school, but starts singing again the old songs that she has learned from the old people. The boys, however, continue to sing the songs, chiefly military, learned in school."

No instrumental music was taught in the school, but the radio was beginning to have some effect on the peasants' choice of music. One man listened to the radio fifteen days, stopping almost all other activity, in order to get the words of a jazz song then popular. These he sang with great gusto to his admiring friends. Many of the young people were becoming ashamed of the old songs and told me that they were out of date. The new popular songs that they learned were contained in *Pesnopoiki* (songbooks) bought for a few cents on market days.

The singing of some particularly lively tune at the evening gatherings might lead to folk dancing in which both the boys and the girls took part. The very foundations of the house seemed to shake as the feet shuffled in time to the music. Parlor games of various sorts, quite similar to those played at a rural church social in America, were frequently played at these *sedenki.* This meant that the girls laid aside their spinning entirely and what started out as a work-bee became entirely a social gathering.

[2 The "sedenka", or "spinning party", the Bulgarian part of an American pioneer cornhusking and quilting bee -- Analyst]
[The "sedenki" -- Analyst]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



584 574 883

Usually after midnight, the singing at the *sedenka* began to decrease in volume, conversation became dull, and the boys sensed that it was time to go. After their departure the hostess often served refreshments such as a soggy cheese pie *(banitsa)*, and the girls might or might not spend the night. The courting aspect of the gathering was emphasized by the fact that none of the married people of the household, except the mother of the girl acting as hostess, could be present. Even she was absent much of the time in some of the homes.

538

It was at these *sedenki* that I collected a number of village proverbs, which were a real conversational aid to young people somewhat tongue-tied in mixed company.

"A kind word opens an iron gate."

"God gives but does not drive into the stall."

"A wet person is not afraid of rain."

"Listen much, speak little."

"Short are the legs of a lie."

"Stretch out your feet according to your quilt."

"I am telling your daughter so that daughter-in-law may hear [speaking indirectly]."

"After the rain, a raincape."

"Every pear has a stem."

"Give advice freely but not money."

"The thirsty carry water."

"A dog that barks much puts a wolf in the stall."

584 517 883

Within recent years the *vecherinki* provided young people other means of getting acquainted. The purpose of a *vecherinka*, or evening entertainment in the schoolhouse, was not to get any work done, but to raise money for some worthy cause. The villagers bought tickets to a program of music or drama, provided by both imported and local talent. Auctions and lotteries were features of most *vecherinki*. After the program was over the people joined in dancing: first, for an hour or so, they danced the native *hora*, to be followed, when the old folks

[525] [535]

[A "sedenka" is a spinning party — The Bulgarian part of an American pioneer corn husking and quilting bee — Analyst]

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



585 quantities of wine and *rakiya,* the hiring of musicians from Sofia, and the baking of many pies and loaves of bread. Of course, the women of the neighborhood shared in the excitement by helping both the parents of the bride and of the groom.

Before the church service all of the young people who could find a wagon went to the bride's house, and after certain formalities took her possessions to the home of the groom. The bony horses raced around the curves in a cloud of dust while the boys cracked whips and shot guns. The procession to the church went first to the home of the godparents, a point of special honor, then to the home of the groom, and finally to that of the bride. As in America, there was room for great variety in wedding procedures, according to the amount of money the families could afford to spend.

431 584 Another important aspect of a village wedding was the custom of presenting important guests with some sort of garment. The groom's family gave a shirt, a belt, or a handkerchief to each of its close relatives, but the bride had to have something ready for the relatives of both families. When she was eight or nine years old she began preparing these numerous presents, doing them all by hand. In return she received a small sum of money from each person she honored. At the first weddings I attended I failed, through ignorance of the custom, to live up to my part of the bargain, but that seemed to make no difference in the way the people felt toward me. They never came to remind me of the oversight, because with natural courtesy they did not want to make me, a guest, feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. One evening when I was visiting one of the families I knew best, I asked a twenty-year-old girl to show me her hope chest containing the presents that she intended to give away as well as those garments that she planned to keep for her own use. This is what the chest contained:

● [574]

25 pairs of socks knitted by the girl
55 long white shirts of homespun cloth (half to be given away)
35 homespun belts to be given to unmarried men
15 face towels
15 headkerchiefs worn by married women
20 *sukmani,* or black jumper dresses (most to be kept by the girl)

This girl was by no means from a rich household.

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria FE1



591 by her husband, to come and live with him. Most married daughters
● 594 liked to visit in their parental homes on Sundays and other holidays, with their children and their husbands. While the frequency of visitation naturally varied with the daughters' sociability, it was significant that the daughters of wealthy peasants returned more often for visits than the daughters of poor peasants. There might have been an economic as well as a filial motive involved in this visitation. Married daughters still living in Dragalevtsy frequently called on their mothers, and helped them through difficult times. In more than half of the homes the married daughter-mother bond was kept intact, a source of comfort to both parties.

593 Married sons living with their parents were far more considerate of them than sons who had separated and lived in houses of their own. While in the paternal home they were subject to the authority of the old people, especially to that of the father. Sons living separately had no reason to obey the father if, as was usual in such cases, the property had already been divided. Though he might go to his father for advice, he was just as apt to seek the advice of tavern cronies. Of course, there were many variations of this situation. One thirty-eight year old son, married but not living in the paternal home, consulted his father about everything of importance—buying land, selling animals, building a house.

In another case, where the youngest son and his family lived in the paternal home with the widowed mother, the son got along extremely well with the mother. For instance, when she slapped him resoundingly because he had gone to the drink-shop, he simply smiled and said: "All right, you have the right to do that." He consulted his mother about many things, saw to it that she did not do heavy work and that she had an honorable place in the household.

In one household the twenty-six year old son spent little time at home because of his job as the *Obshtina* courier. He and his father experienced considerable conflict because he did not hand over his earnings to the old man but spent them on his own needs. At the same time he was living and eating free of charge in his father's house, much to the satisfaction of his mother who championed him before her husband. Naturally the son was dissatisfied with staying at home,

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



593 Although this insight into the relations between parents and their children, both adult and immature, has taken us beyond the period of childhood, it does show us why the children had to learn obedience and respect and why the village would soon show its dissatisfaction [857] with anyone who flouted the established rules. Children also learned to defer to an older brother or sister, and assumed responsibility for those who were younger. In the main, a child's life was centered about the home and about those activities which he shared with members of his immediate family or the relatives in the neighborhood who were young enough to be his playmates.

527 Children became acquainted with their relatives in other villages ● 574 on the annual *Subor* or "At Home Day" which each village observed. Dragalevtsy families had four village *Subori* which they could attend; on Pantaley Den (August 9) they could go to Boyana; on Spasov Den (the Monday of the eighth week after Easter) they could go to Durvenitsa; on Petkov Den (October 27) they could visit Bistritsa; and on Archangel Day (November 21) they could visit Simeonovo.

I once attended this Simeonovo *Subor* with the Dragalevtsy families. I was told gravely by the old women that on this day everyone must be especially good, for the Archangel Michael was the one who received the souls of the dead into heaven. On the day preceding, the Simeonovo women had gathered to make many loaves of bread from flour previously donated to the church by its loyal supporters. Early on the morning of the *Subor* the church sexton with some helpers killed four sheep for the big meat stews; later he gave terse commands regarding the flavoring of the stews: bean and mutton, cabbage and mutton, and rice and mutton—a somewhat monotonous menu, but one hallowed by tradition.

We started our four-mile walk at an early hour. The air was crisp and so clear that the great Balkan range, miles across the plain, stood out sharply in its rose and blue. By midmorning a large number of people, including the children, had come into the churchyard. Most of them entered the church and attended part of the service; the women carried bread and boiled corn to be blessed by the priest, who received a portion. At noon, the church service was concluded and the priest blessed the meal prepared under the auspices of the church. Then it

2
: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



was that a few hundred people—guests, villagers, and total strangers—partook of the common meal. This dinner was typical. There was wine in abundance, for, as a member of the financial committee told me, wine induced a generous spirit in the hearts of those making their annual pledges to the church. After the meal and the pledges, the crowd dispersed. Visitors went home with family groups for further eating and drinking. The village square became a kaleidoscope of colors when peasant boys and girls began to dance the stately *horo* to the music of the pipes and drums.

With the coming of evening the guests left the village. Simeonovo moved again through a period of quiet and almost unbroken monotony until Archangel Day next year. Of course Christmas and Easter brought celebrations, but not the dash and gaiety that the presence of several hundred outsiders invariably created.

In spite of these set occasions for visiting, a surprising number of Dragalevtsy people stayed put, at least as far as going to other villages was concerned. *(See Appendix V.)* They had business in Sofia, and could justify going there. But almost half of the *stopani* never went to another village, even though there were four villages within five miles of Dragalevtsy. The same held true for their wives, the *domakini.* But those that did take such trips usually let their children go along, at least on some of the visits. These proved to be gala events in the lives of the youngsters.

In addition to the commemoration of Christmas and Easter and the celebration of St. George's Day, described in the last chapter,[1] there were other holidays during the year which interested the children as much if not more than they did the adults. On the few summer holidays the villagers avoided any strenuous field work; since most of the special days came in the winter it was simple enough "to remember the holiday and take it easy." If the people found it necessary to do some important job on a holiday, they had a precedent set by no less a personage than St. Peter himself. On his own name day (July 12) he saw that the grain needed harvesting, so he took a piece of hearth cake in one hand and a sickle in the other and went to work reaping his wheat "so that the ripe grains wouldn't fall to the ground."

[1] [Cf. pp. 106-111, category 116--Analyst]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

857

"Studying their lessons in the pasture while tending the sheep . . ."
*See page 117.*

574

Dragalevtsy families on their way to a *Subor* in Simeonovo.
*See page 124.*

[Facing p. 128]

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



527 857 and provide food and drink for their friends on their name days. Children had to grow into the many practices surrounding holidays just as they had to grow into understanding of how to become a good farmer. It took some time to learn, for example, that on September 11, the Day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, one should have nothing to do with objects colored red. That color symbolized blood and guilt. On the first of March, however, red was very much in evidence. In the cities the young people exchange *martenitsi*, equivalent to our Valentines. This day was popularly called *Baba Marta* or "Old Woman March," because the weather during March was changeable and whimsical.

Although the villagers themselves paid little attention to the patriotic holidays which had been started within the past few decades, children welcomed them, for they meant a variation in the school routine. Schoolteachers would never think of letting a patriotic holiday go by without some special exercises. Among such holidays were those commemorating the liberation of Bulgaria, the King's birthday, the King's name day, the King's ascension to the throne. A special holiday for students was also becoming firmly rooted. It was the one honoring the missionary brothers, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who were the patron saints of learning.

[57+] These holidays, both religious and patriotic, were often the occasion for relatives to come to the village. The buses, mysteriously held together in places by baling wire, chugged up the hill to the square to disgorge their load of people and grotesque bundles. Children crowded around to greet the newcomers and merrily skipped beside [166] them as they walked toward the house. However, one-third of the homes had *no* visitors from outside the village during the year. Many of the visitors were originally from Dragalevtsy. A record of one year's migrants, twenty-one in all, showed that six had married outsiders and settled elsewhere; four had gone as soldiers, four as students, two as laborers, and the rest as cabmen, watchmen, and a coffeehouse proprietor.

527 857 608 All these holidays meant much to the children: exciting food, observance of age-old customs, and the arrival of guests. A few holidays were of special importance to godparents and godchildren. On

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



156 702 turn to Sofia for employment and sympathy. But the significant fact is that most young people do submit to the process of resocialization and as they grow older adopt the conservatism of their elders. In other words, no attempt is made in the army experience to teach them new farming methods, bee-keeping, animal breeding, or anything else which they might apply in a useful way upon their return to the village.

554 789 484 3. For the Good of His Soul. When asked "Why do you go on pilgrimages to various Bulgarian monasteries?" the peasants often answer: "We go for the good of our souls." No mention is made of the enhanced social status that is theirs as a result of such a trip or the excitement of being sped on their way at the edge of the village by the priest and a flock of relatives or welcomed back far outside the village by the same relatives two or three days later. The most popular place to visit is Rila Monastery, the historic, magnificent establishment in the heart of the Rila Mountains to which thousands come at Easter time. The Dragalevtsy peasants (only thirty-five from the village went in 1934) mix with the assembled multitudes at Rila, attend the services, buy sacred objects, and snatch what sleep they can before starting on the return journey. If they are walking, the pilgrimage requires five or six days; if they go by automobile from Sofia, they spend one day en route each way. In olden days pilgrimages played a great part in creating social contacts between the villages and the outside world. Now we can safely conclude that as other means of making social contact increase, the importance of making pilgrimages decreases.

484 574 4. To Visit Socially. Once a year a Bulgarian village has an "At Home Day." This event always falls on the name day of the saint, angel, or member of the Trinity for whom the local church is named and is commemorated by the preparation of immense quantities of stews for the few hundred guests from outside. Many of these guests are old residents returning with their families for a visit. There is a special service at which bread and boiled corn is blessed, the priest in return receiving a portion of the food. At the meal afterward, to which all guests are invited, pledges are made for the upkeep of the local church. Many guests would rather go to the homes of friends and relatives than partake of the common meal; this makes more intimate visitation possible. These "At Homes" of neighboring villages are the chief attractions drawing the peasants from Dragalevtsy to other villages. Table 13 on the following page shows us how often Dragalevtsy family heads visit other villages (for the "At Home" as well as other purposes).

484 Combining the data in this table with other information obtained we can make the following conclusions regarding the social visits of Dragalevtsy people to other villages:

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



stop to spend money in a generous manner. This is one reason that the peasants complain so bitterly of their dull, monotonous life and long to have their children counted among the white-collar class. 369

Recently Dragalevtsy has become a mountain summer resort. Twelve families have little villas in or near the village, while as many more live in the monastery. These seasonal guests buy most of their produce from the villagers, and patronize Bai Penko's tavern daily. Some, especially the twelve families with summer houses, are counted as real citizens of Dragalevtsy, though the peasants do not try to assimilate them into their informal groups. These summer guests are in a position to do much in the way of village improvement if they cared to seize their opportunities. 529

2. FAMILY GUESTS. Another important influence from outside comes in the form of guests entertained by the family during the course of a year. The numbers of guests from Sofia, from other towns, and from villages are shown in Table 14 below: 574

TABLE 14

GUESTS IN DRAGALEVTSY HOMES DURING THE YEAR 1934, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO DOMICILE (CENSUS OF 1934)

| NUMBER OF GUESTS | NUMBER OF FAMILIES ENTERTAINING GUESTS | | | TOTAL NUMBER OF GUESTS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | From City | From Town | From Village | From City | From Town | From Village |
| 0 | 96 | 249 | 62 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1-10 | 125 | 8 | 135 | 786 | 36 | 824 |
| 11-20 | 34 | 0 | 58 | 555 | 0 | 888 |
| 21-30 | 3 | 0 | 14 | 75 | 0 | 380 |
| 31-40 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 150 | 0 | 35 |
| 41-50 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 0 | 0 |
| Over 50 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100 | 0 | 65 |
| Total | 172 | 8 | 209 | 1,916 | 36 | 2,192 |

*Computed from actual figures and not from class midpoints.

Out of the 268 families that reported, 96 families do not have any guests from Sofia during the year. The guests visiting the 172 remaining families total 1,916 people. In other words, if all the people who come from Sofia to visit stayed in the village and did not return home, the village would little more than double its present population, ignoring the possible natural increase. Of course, the total of 1,916 does not necessarily include that many people, but certainly over 1,000. These visitors are relatives or friends, generally of peasant origin, who have gone to the big city and succeeded. As one stands in

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



●574 the main village square and sees these visitors arrive, averaging 36 each Sunday, one marvels at the grotesque bundles with which their arms are loaded. A christening, a wedding, and, to a less extent, a funeral, call them back to the village. Conveniently for them, christenings and weddings take place on Sundays; funerals, unfortunately for them, cannot wait for Sunday but occur a day or two after the death.

There are no towns within forty or fifty miles of Sofia, and therefore very few guests from other towns visit the village. Only 8 families report such guests, the total number of the visitors reaching 36.

Out of 271 families reporting, only 62 do not have guests from other villages during the year. This means that 209 families do. The total number of outside villagers is 2,192, many of them coming to Dragalevtsy's "At Home Day" on the Day of the Holy Trinity.

Only a few of these guests originally came from Dragalevtsy but it is of interest to notice how many leave the village permanently in the course of a single year, why, and where they go. These facts are shown in Table 15.

TABLE 15

166 MEMBERS OF FARM HOUSEHOLDS WHO PERMANENTLY LEFT DRAGALEVTSY DURING 1934, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO REASON FOR LEAVING AND DESTINATION (CENSUS DATA)

| LEFT TO BECOME: | DESTINATION: | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sofia | Town | Village | |
| Soldier | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Student | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Coffee house proprietor | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cabman | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Watchman | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Laborer | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Wife | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| Husband | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Unreported | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 11 | 3 | 7 | 21* |

*These 21 persons came from 19 of the 279 families covered by the census questionnaire.

574 3. VILLAGE GUESTS. During the course of a winter several *vecherinki*, or community parties, are staged in the schoolhouse by some organization for the purpose of raising funds. These are usually followed by a dance at which the thirty-five guests from Sofia (that being the average) mix little with the peasant folk. These guests are entertainers or friends of the intelligentsia.

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

574

"The . . . purpose of the *sedenka* is to help some woman card her . . . wool." *See page 261.*

[Facing p. 260]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



178 181 Instead of concentrating on the improvement of home-making and the encouragement of hygienic practices, which were their primary aims, they were also trying to change the women's meeting habits, or their ways of getting together. They insisted that the women leave their homes and come to the school for an artificially assembled meeting of a stiff, formal sort where they would be on the "receiving end," without the give-and-take of informal conversation to which they were accustomed.

As I sensed this difficulty I became convinced that the folkways already provided an avenue to the village women: namely, the *sedenka,* or "sitting," which is the name the villagers have given to the women's working groups.

574 476 THE SEDENKA.[1] Allegedly, the main purpose of the *sedenka* is to help some woman card her fluffy, newly-washed wool or to help her spin some of the wool into thread. Actually, it is recreational as well, for the women thoroughly enjoy sharing the gossip, the songs, and the food which accompany such get-togethers. Although these *sedenki* (pl.) seem at times to be hit-or-miss affairs, certain unwritten rules govern their activity. If a woman, for example, wants to have the help of her neighbors in carding her wool there are procedures she must follow.

1. She will select the guests quite carefully, inviting those who owe her work in kind or those to whose houses she wants to be invited when they card their wool. She rejects from the number those who cause ill-feeling, who stir up trouble, or who are at odds with each other. Similarly she rejects those whose houses she does not want to visit in a "return engagement" either because their food is poorly prepared or because they are dirty and slovenly in their housekeeping. At times she is prevailed upon by a close friend or a relative to invite some individual who is not popular enough to receive many invitations but who is anxious for the social intercourse that these occasions provide.

2. She will issue the invitations in the time-honored way. Although she may have seen two friends the evening before at the fountain and learned from them that they definitely plan to attend, she nevertheless goes to their homes before daybreak to call out in the crisp autumn air, "Anka, Anka." The dogs set up a terrific roar, and Anka finally appears at the door. "I'm having a *sedenka* today and I hope you can come." Anka accepts most graciously, while the walking alarm clock moves on to issue the next invitation.

3. She will prepare quantities of special food. There are certain dishes that are *sedenka* favorites. In the fall, one of these is *banitsa,* a soggy pumpkin pie two feet in diameter. A stew of beans or one of meat and vegetables is often popular.

4. She will see that the activities at the *sedenka* flow along normally. There must be enough of the comb-like affairs, long spikes set in a small

[1] [For additional material, see pp. 74-77, category 116--Analyst]

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



574 476 wooden frame, through which the wool is drawn. The women in all parts of the room must be kept supplied with wool. Mealtimes must come at the prescribed intervals, and the good conversationalists must be urged to repeat some of the latest news, while those who consider themselves singers must be encouraged to start a song. And so the day passes. The women have arrived in the morning as soon as they completed their morning tasks, and they stay until midafternoon. At other times, however, a smaller group assembles in the evening for four or five hours of enjoyment and spinning.

521 Needless to say, these *sedenka* groups[1] are powerful agencies in the dissemination of news and in the formation of village opinion. After a day spent in one of these sessions a woman has a supply of "small talk" sufficient to last her for two or three days in conversations with those who did not attend this particular gathering.

000 GOOD EXTENSION PRINCIPLES AND THE SEDENKA. The specialist who uses a *sedenka,* whether especially arranged for her or not, would be following good educational and sociological practice.

1. *She would be bringing people together in a familiar environment:* that is, one of the village homes. There would not be the strangeness of the schoolroom nor the distractions of completely new surroundings. Instead of having to adjust to a new place and a new person (the speaker) the women would play the role of hostesses and expect the speaker to adjust to them.

2. *The people would already be accustomed to meeting with each other.* Any newly-formed group needs an exploratory period in which the bolder individuals try various things on the group to see what meets with favor and what with stony indifference or frank disapproval. In a *sedenka* group, people already know how their remarks and their questions will be received, which is a matter of much importance in a learning situation. Among people who do not know each other well an ill-advised laugh at a sincere question can kill the chances of a lively, helpful, wholehearted discussion. The congeniality of the group is further assured by the fact that the hostess is able to use a selective technique which weeds out the incompatibles. Fortunately, these "incompatibles" are usually compatible in other groups where they have much in common with their associates in these groups. Therefore, every village woman could be reached in some *sedenka* grouping.

3. *The demonstration agent could use the artifacts of the village home to good advantage.* As far as possible the demonstration should be built around what the women already have, for that is what they must use if they follow the speaker's suggestions. The average village home would not spend more than four or five dollars a year on furnishings, utensils, and the like, nor could one expect them to spend more than this out of the meager budget

[1] [cf pp 74-77, p. 261, category 116 -- Analyst]